Talking to Your Employer about the 2020 WAND Annual Conference

No matter how much you want to attend the WAND Annual Conference you may find that before you can click REGISTER, you still have to convince your manager to let you go and figure out how to pay for it! Here are some steps you can take to convince your manager that you should attend.

Review the Program and Exhibitor List
Determine which sessions you want to attend and justify this selection to your manager; craft a curriculum that will provide you and your organization with the information you need. Select the ones that are most beneficial to you, your team, and company and when explaining the selection to your manager, be specific. Click here for a link to the conference brochure.

Our Thursday, April 2nd expo will host numerous vendors showcasing a wide range of innovative food and nutrition products and services that help meet your needs. You can visit the Expo and be among the first to learn about new, innovative products, discover trends and strengthen business relationships. Consider the business opportunities that could develop from establishing connections with industry professionals and partners. Make sure to download the conference app to view the full list of exhibitors. Plus, this year’s expo is social too, making it both fun and educational!

Outline the Costs
The bottom line is that the smarter you are, the better it is for your organization. You know that organizations take on an almost unfathomable amount of risk when they don’t have the most informed, up-to-date registered dietitian nutritionists and nutrition and dietetic technicians, registered. Your manager may be worried about the cost or even your time out of the office, but it is worth it in the long run. Let them know you have figured out a way to make it as cost-effective as possible! Register by March 11th, 2020 before rates increase and book your hotel room at the same time using our discounted rate. Rooms are available at The Osthoff Resort in Elkhart Lake at the special group rate of $129.00 (plus tax). To guarantee this rate,
and to ensure a room will be available, reservations must be made no later than March 6th, 2020.

View your request as a business proposal and negotiation. Aim for the ideal but be willing to compromise when objections arise. For example:

- Offer to pay portions of costs, i.e. your mileage or meals (remember Breakfast and Lunch meals are included with conference registration on Thursday and Friday!).
- Arrange to room with a colleague to split hotel costs.
- Trade in vacation days or comp time for some or all of the conference time.

Make a Follow up Plan
All registrants receive conference materials to download and share. Explain to your employer that you can share sessions with colleagues or conduct group studies. This provides a value not only to you but for others on your team!

Write it up and Sell it
Write up a formal proposal to provide your manager. Our sample proposal gives you a great starting point for organizing your thoughts and making sure you are making the best case to attend. Fill in the blanks, edit the brackets, and adapt the proposal with your own voice and personality.

Consider how and when your manager likes to be “pitched.” Your approach and timing can make the difference. Perhaps you may want to email it to your manager first and then request a meeting to discuss it after they’ve had a chance to review. Bring the WAND Conference program and other descriptive materials to the meeting with your manager. Present the information as a valued professional, focusing on mutual goals and benefits.

Looking for more ideas?
Check out these additional resources for requesting conference attendance from the Academy and the Wall Street Journal.

Hope to see you there!
The WAND Annual Conference Professional Education Team
To: [Manager or Supervisor]

Subject: Professional Skill Development at the Wisconsin Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Annual Conference

This proposal is a formal request for [employer name]’s support of my attendance at this year’s Wisconsin Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Annual Conference in Elkhart Lake at the Osthoff Resort from April 1-3, 2020.

[Employer’s name]’s objectives include, [quote your employer’s written statements which relate to some or any of the following: having highly-trained employees; being an employer of choice; quality assurance or high quality of care; being the leader in _______; their commitment to _______]. My proposal aligns with those objectives.

[If your employer has no internally-generated statements to quote, use the following instead:] With a focus on professional development which keeps my job knowledge and skills current, my proposal aligns with exemplary employers that demonstrate a commitment to its employees and [clients] [customers] [patients] by maintaining standards of practice and through continuous improvement of skills and services.

Based on our previous discussion(s) and formal reviews regarding the skills that will enhance my job performance, my professional development goals include:

- List several of your job performance and professional development goals here
- Goal
- Goal

Because of the learning opportunities at the WAND Annual Conference, I’d like to add the following, some of which support our broader [department] goals:

- List one to three additional goals
- Select department or organization goals which align with your learning plan below, E.g., Job skills training to maintain high-quality [describe employer deliverables]
- The following individual learning plan aligns with the above and addresses both my immediate practice area [job focus] and future goals.

I plan to attend the following:

[Use the conference program to make your selections. List the titles; add brief descriptions. List each session in order of importance relative to your job goals and what your boss values, not in order of the schedule. Highlight the sessions which directly relate to current departmental projects and initiatives.]

In addition, I plan to attend the Expo Hall to explore the services and products of the following vendors:

[Bulleted list, supplemented with very brief relevant objectives.]
In addition to attending these technical sessions, I’ll have the opportunity to network and brainstorm with other attendees to learn new strategies and skills to help our business.

I’m requesting [date] to [date] for conference attendance, including travel time, [plus # vacation days], for a total of # work days away. My return-to-work date would be [date].

During my absence, I propose [describe your usual work coverage plan for scheduled absences]. [Or if coworkers plan to attend as well:] I propose we have a meeting to determine the best work coverage and contingency plans for those attending.

WAND Annual Conference Expenses:
[List full expenses, yet be prepared to negotiate, starting with the suggestions listed in the Success Strategies section.]

- Conference Registration $ if I register by March 11th, 2020
- Pre-Conference Registration Costs $
- Car Mileage Costs $
- Lodging for # Nights $ if I register by March 6th, 2020
- Meals for # Days $
- Other Expenses $
- Total $

During my [#] years at [employer’s name], I’ve supported the department’s goals through competent practice, professional contributions and continued training. By attending the Wisconsin Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, I expect to immediately apply updated skills and education to improve my performance for the benefit of [employer name] and its [clients] [customers] [patients]. I respectfully request that [employer] support my attendance at this quality professional development event. [An outcome report and presentation will follow my return.]

Please note that early bird registration closes March 11th and at that time the fees increase, so your prompt attention to this matter is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,
Name
Title